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# RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

# NEWS

"We must open wider the doors of opportunity....  
for the good of our country and all our people"  
President Eisenhower

U. S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D. C.

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Major news in the Rural Development Program this month is the special aid Federal Government agencies now have available to support the work of local leaders in pilot counties. Agency funds for the 1956-57 Rural Development Program will provide new personnel or services in about 50 of these experimental counties. This should give a strong push to local programs, and encourage their leaders to move forward with well-organized development work.

SERVICES TO REINFORCE COUNTY PROGRAMS: The following USDA agencies will put special resources into pilot counties in order to help Rural Development Committees and others with their programs:

Federal Extension Service: Federal funds appropriated for this purpose are allocated on the basis of proposals submitted by individual States based on State Rural Development Committee recommendations. These funds can be used to employ additional extension workers to assist with pilot county programs. These workers can carry forward intensive farm and home development work with individual families and provide leadership and support for local Rural Development Committees.

Soil Conservation Service: Improved management of soil, water, and timber resources on small farms is an important part of the county program. SCS is preparing to place one full-time soil conservationist and one part-time soil scientist in most pilot counties to specialize in work with small farms.

Farmers Home Administration: Congress made basic and important changes in the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act. They will have widespread effect in rural development areas. FHA may now make loans for operating and developing farms whose operators work part-time in industry and trades, and for refinancing farmers' debts. Agency representatives are now writing regulations governing this part of the loan program.

Both the Agricultural Research Service and the Agricultural Marketing Service are planning far-reaching research projects on the economic and farm-home management problems of families on small farms. Some of these studies will also focus on area economic problems and obstacles to development.

A few of the planned ARS projects: Evaluation of opportunities open to people in low-income rural areas -- studies of effective ways to increase small farm income -- studies of credit, land ownership practices, and physical resources. AMS projects include, among others: Developing guides for locating processing plants in low-income farm areas -- evaluating factors that promote small business in these areas -- broad studies of manpower, education, and health facilities.

USDA agencies will cooperate closely with State Experiment Stations in much of this research. A few projects will be directly related to programs in pilot counties, and all information obtained will be available to State and county leaders in all States.

The Forest Service is making a special effort to help pilot counties promote better use of forest resources, so essential to economic development in many areas.

The Rural Electrification Administration has alerted its borrowers to the program and urged cooperation in pilot counties.

Other Federal Departments also have important responsibilities.

The Commerce Department's Office of Area Development is adding personnel in order to service rural areas moving forward with business, industry, and recreation development plans. These specialists will place emphasis on Rural Development Program pilot counties. (See the report on a Garrett County, Maryland, study, on page 4.)

Cooperating with State agencies in the all-important fields of health, education, public welfare, and vocational rehabilitation, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has an active role in the Rural Development Program. The Department has encouraged the various State Agencies to take part in pilot county programs.

The Bureaus of Indian Affairs, Reclamation, and Fish and Wildlife, and the National Park Service (all agencies of the Interior Department) have skills and counsel which can be useful in certain pilot counties. The Department has full representation in the Rural Development Program.

State and local employment service offices, with which the Department of Labor cooperates closely, have already made substantial contributions to some State programs. This participation will be stepped up as county leaders call for technical help with problems of manpower use and underemployment.

WORKING CONFERENCE DEVELOPS PROGRAM PRINCIPLES: In mid-July representatives of eight States (typical of States with Rural Development Programs) and the Federal Government met to discuss experience in community improvement and guidelines for effective work. The group, meeting for two days, did not attempt to formulate "rules" for operating State or local Rural Development Programs.

In discussing Secretary Ezra Taft Benson's original idea of a broad-scale program to raise living standards in disadvantaged farm areas, the group attending this "working meeting" emphasized that it is founded on these basic principles:



1. Leadership of people in the counties and State areas is crucial. Without this, no program will succeed.
2. Private groups, local leaders, and government agencies need to work together toward definite development goals.
3. A Rural Development Program involves all appropriate services and resources -- including those outside agriculture.
4. New techniques must be pioneered to reach farm families who don't take advantage of present service programs.

Organization based on State and county committees, which was suggested at the Memphis meeting of State representatives in June 1955, remains the most effective method of operating State programs, the conference agreed.

Key individuals in State programs are the chairman and secretary of the State Rural Development Committee and their counterparts on pilot county committees. A county committee secretary might be an employee of a government agency or paid from private or county funds. He has the responsibility of assisting the county committee to insure its effective operation.

Conference participants stressed the importance of broad representation in the Rural Development Program. A complex program such as this, calling for diverse skills and services, requires the participation of both agricultural and non-agricultural interests. The group singled out as especially important to State programs farm organizations; education, health, welfare, vocational rehabilitation, employment, and industrial development agencies; religious, civic, business, and credit groups.

Within pilot counties, certain organizations and groups stand in crucial positions and can generate widespread support for county development work. These include farm organizations; church leaders; civic and service clubs; major businesses; utilities, and banks; newspapers and radio stations. The conference emphasized that young people should be given a part in county programs -- their enthusiasm and interest will often motivate their parents.

To develop essential information that can be used in preparing plans and measuring progress, county program leaders should first undertake an evaluation of resources and needs. Federal and State agencies, local universities, and businesses and banks, it was observed, often stand in a position to aid in preliminary surveys.

(If you want more details on this meeting, write for "A Report on the Working Conference, Rural Development Program," Office of Information, USDA, Washington 25, D. C.)

MINISTERS TAKE LEAD IN COUNTY PROGRAM: On August 4, Under Secretary Fred D. Monroe met with members of the Monroe County, Ohio, Rural Development Committee to discuss the outstanding progress county people are making in their program.

Two years ago, the ministers in the county became actively concerned about the future of the area, the committee stated. The county had been losing more than 90 percent of its high school graduates. Incomes per family averaged about \$1,200 per year. Since 1910 there has been a drastic decline in population.

Now a new, \$90 million industrial plant, which will employ about 2,000 people, is being built in the county. New markets for farmers and new job opportunities for members of farm families will result. Families can continue to live at home and have a much more adequate income.

The Monroe County Rural Development Committee, which is again headed by a minister, has broad representation and is working closely with the State committee.

COMMERCE SPECIALISTS ANALYZE MARYLAND'S PILOT COUNTY: A concise, practical analysis of business and other development prospects in Garrett County, Maryland's Rural Development Program pilot county, has been prepared by two representatives of the Office of Area Development, U. S. Department of Commerce. The study, written by Harry Clement and John Abrahamson, is based on information developed during visits to the county and meetings with local leaders.

In a section, "What You Have That Will Appeal to Industry," the two development experts point out some of the attractions of the county, including low-cost electric power, nearness to natural gas and coal, good rail connections and access to the Pittsburgh industrial complex, trainable labor, and a pleasant environment.

"Getting more industry established in Garrett County," they write, "doesn't mean just trying to bring it in from outside. Many places in this country built industries from scratch, using local resources, local initiative, and local capital."

The Garrett County study is an example of a survey directed to identifying business development opportunities within an area. The Office of Area Development will counsel with pilot county groups who wish to undertake such surveys.